

MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING OF THE NEGRO NATIONAL AND NEGRO AMERICAN BASEBALL LEAGUES HELD ON TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 1943, AT THE QUAKER CITY ELKS LODGE, 1943 CHRISTIAN STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

President Thomas T. Wilson of Negro National League presiding; Ed. Gottlieb, acting secretary.

Following members were present: Homestead Grays-S.H. Posey; Newark Eagles-Mr. and Mrs. Manley; Baltimore Elite Gts.-Vernon Green; Phila. Stars-Ed. Bolden; N. Y. Cuban Stars-Aleck Pompey; N. Y. Black Yankees-James Semler and Bill Leuschner; St. Louis-Harrisburg Stars-George Mitchell; Dr. J. B. Martin-President Negro American League; and representing Chicago American Gts. and Cincinnati Clowns; Kansas City Monarchs-T. Y. Baird; Memphis Red Sox and Birmingham Black Barons-Dr. B. B. Martin; Cleveland Buckeyes-Ernest Wright and Wilbur Hayes.

President Wilson opened the meeting by stating that the chief purpose in calling it was to take up the matter of players jumping from one League to another, and to decide whether the working agreement between the two Leagues was to be kept in operation or not.

President Wilson said that he definitely would back the agreement to the limit and asked the support of the Negro National League members in sending the players back to the clubs where they belong.

Dr. J. B. Martin, president of the Negro American League, discussed the player situation and the misunderstanding between the two Leagues. He spoke in favor of keeping the agreement and having the two Leagues work in harmony as they had been doing, and wanted all players returned to clubs they belong. He also said that See Posey had written to The Pittsburgh Courier that the agreement had been broken. Martin said, however, he had not accepted that as official because he felt such an announcement should come from Mr. Wilson. He said he had talked with Judge Landis, and that Landis had recommended a Commissioner and a sound treasury with forfeits in order to operate Negro baseball on a sound business basis.

S. H. Posey asked for the reading of the minutes of Joint Meeting of August 17, 1942, to show the Negro American League broke the agreement in 1942 by playing the Ethiopian Clowns and using Negro National League players, particularly some Baltimore Elite men who played with Cleveland Buckeyes at a time when Baltimore was involved in a championship series with the Homestead Grays. He stated that was the reason they took players from the Negro American League, as he understood the agreement was broken. Minutes were read.

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Then Mitchell claimed Theolic Smith was taken from him by Cleveland. He also referred to the Joint Meeting of August 17, 1942, regarding agreement made by these leagues. He brought out the point that the American League violated the agreement last season when they refused to abide by the decision of the National League regarding the status of the St. Louis Players, and the Negro American League barred their clubs from playing the N. Y. Black Yankees, thereby causing said Black Yankees to lose a considerable amount of money, especially during spring training when a number of games that had already been arranged, were cancelled.

Mrs. Manley then suggested a Commissioner for Negro baseball.

Dr. B. B. Martin took the floor and discussed the use of the Baltimore players by Cleveland, also the playing against the Ethiopian Clowns and admitted both were wrong, and punishment should have been meted out, which he would have abided by. He stated that all clubs should put up a substantial deposit to force them to abide by rulings. He also said that he and Tom Wilson were a committee and held a hearing with Ernest Wright of Cleveland and reprimanded him for breaking the agreement with respect to the three players. Martin said, at that time he was willing to put Wright out of the American League, but President Wilson agreed to forget about it.

S. H. Posey asked Dr. J. B. Martin about the Benjamin case, where the members of the Negro American League swore that Benjamin never played with Toledo, when they all actually knew that he was in the Toledo lineup under an assumed name.

Dr. J. B. Martin answered by saying that all other disputed matters had been settled, and the only discussion to be taken up at this meeting was the present matter of players.

Tom Baird of Kansas City said the American League had admitted the fault and had paid \$100 fine to the Grays in the Benjamin case.

Motion by Baird, seconded by Dr. B. B. Martin, to discuss only 1942 and 1943 disputes. Motion carried by vote of 7 to 6 with Memphis, Chicago, Kansas City, Birmingham, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Baltimore voting yes, and Newark, Homestead, St. Louis-Harrisburg, Phila., and N. Y. Black Yankees and N. Y. Cuban Stars voting no.

S. H. Posey asked to see the written proxies for the clubs that were not present. Discussion arose and when these written proxies could not be produced, the previous motion was withdrawn, although president

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Wilson ruled that he would accept the votes even though the proxies were not in writing.

Motion by Baird, seconded by Dr. B. B. Martin, that the following players be returned to their original clubs.

Chas. Shields (Grays) to Chicago
Ollie West (Grays) to Chicago
Jas. Bell (Grays) to Memphis
Verdell Mathis (Phila.) to Memphis
Ira Keyes (Phila.) to Memphis
Willie Burns (Phila.) to Memphis
Tom Brown (St. Louis) to Memphis
Marvin Carter (St. Louis) to Memphis
Wm. Bradford (Yanks) to Memphis
Theolic Smith (Cleveland) to St. Louis

Wilbur Hayes spoke on the player question. He claimed that Theolic Smith did not belong to St. Louis and raised question that the money he had invested in keeping Smith from going back to Mexico should be returned, if he sent him to the St. Louis club. George Mitchell said that he would pay it back if Smith admitted that he owed that amount.

See Posey demanded same conditions regarding Shields and West, and stated that he would send these men back on payment of the money, but would not return Bell, as he was definitely the property of the Negro National League.

Vote was taken on the motion regarding the returning of the players, and resulted as follows: N.Y. Cubans, Chicago, Phila., Memphis, Baltimore, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Birmingham, and Kansas City ~~voted~~ and ~~YES~~ N.Y. Black Yanks voted YES; with Newark not voting and Homestead Grays and Cleveland voting NO.

It was then ruled by President's Thomas T. Wilson and Dr. J. B. Martin that ~~they~~ players would have to be returned to their proper teams by June 15, 1943, and that clubs violating this order would be suspended from organized Negro baseball. Also that any players refusing to return to their proper teams would be suspended. However, clubs were not to be held responsible for failure of players to return to their proper teams, providing their part of the agreement was fulfilled by ordering these men to report back to their proper teams and not using them. Any debts owed by disputed players must be paid by clubs to whom they are returning, and must be in presidents hands before men are returned. This money is to be held by the president for seven (7) days after the return of the men. Only actual advances are to be repaid, and transportation for the return of these men to be paid by the clubs to whom they are going.

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Homestead Grays and Cleveland Buckeyes objected to the ruling, and Semler raised a question on the decision.

The discussion started anew and Ed. Gottlieb said that the American League had violated the agreement on numerous occasions, and it was always overlooked, while in the case of the National League, the American League always demanded some action. He pointed out that American League players had jumped to the Ethiopian Clowns and yet the teams of that League played the Clowns. Also that the Clowns were not to have used the name Ethiopian Clowns, as members of the League, but were still doing it, and a poster was presented as proof. He said that the Clowns had moved into Cincinnati last year, and competed against the Buckeyes for patronage, and that other American League teams played the Clowns in Cincinnati, despite the fact that they were violating the territorial rights rule by playing an outlaw team in a League city. He wanted to know, in view of the record of past violations, what assurance there was that other violations would not be repeated if the occasion arose.

Phila. also disputed the claim of Memphis to Keyes and Burns, offering in evidence the statement made by president Dr. J. B. Martin of the Negro American League, in The Pittsburgh Courier that Keyes and Burns were both free agents. Wendell Smith, Sports Editor of The Pittsburgh Courier supported this statement as being given to him by Dr. J. B. Martin. The discussion was dropped by Phila. on the assurance of Dr. J. B. Martin, and Dr. B. B. Martin and Thomas T. Wilson, that the matter of these two men could be easily adjusted. Phila. also stated that Mathis was working in a defense plant and asked permission from the Memphis club to use him while he was working in this territory.

George Mitchell claimed Theolic Smith on the basis of an agreement which states that players who go to Mexico are the property of the team and league that they left, upon their return to Negro organized baseball. Dr. B. B. Martin disputed Mitchell's claim and was supported by Wilbur Hayes and Ernest Wright.

Then the issue was raised about James Bell. Posey claimed he belonged to the N.N.L. because he had played with the Pittsburgh Crawfords before going to Mexico. Tom Wilson said that Bell was really his property because he secured him from Gus Greenlee, when the latter was owner of the Pittsburgh Crawfords. He said when Greenlee quit baseball he turned Bell over to him, but instead Bell went to Mexico, and when he returned he played with Chicago in the American League.. Wilson said he did not protest at that time because he was not particularly interested in Bell.

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It was claimed that Pepper Bassett was taken by Chicago from the N.N.L. Newark claimed to have lost James Moore to Atlanta a few years ago. Mitchell said that when he moved from St. Louis to New York he was given permission to take 10 players with him, and that Theolio Smith was one of the 10 men.

Wilbur Hayes and Ernest Wright spoke and said that Theolio Smith belonged to the A.N.L., and that Mitchell did not have him listed as one of the 10 men.

President Thomas Wilson ruled that the players should be returned to their respective clubs ~~according~~ as he and Dr. J. B. Martin ordered.

Dr. B. B. Martin said he would release all claims on William Bradford for \$20 owed him by Bradford, and that he would allow Phila. to keep Burns and Keyes if Mathis returned to Memphis.

The vote on the Presidents rulings regarding the return of the men and the payment of the money was taken. Voting as follows: N.Y. Cubans, Chicago, Phila., Memphis, Baltimore, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Birmingham, Kansas City and N.Y. Black Yanks voted YES; with Newark not voting and Homestead Grays and Cleveland voting NO.

The Negro National League asked Dr. J. B. Martin to have the East-West game played Sunday, July 25. Dr. Martin said that he had already made arrangements to play it Sunday, August 1, but would try to make the change, and would advise the National League. The Monday, following the Sunday, to be used as a rain date.

Wilbur Hayes asked about playing an All-Star game in Cleveland and was given permission to play it on the Tuesday following the Chicago game. Proceeds to be divided evenly between the two Leagues.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

ED. GOTTLIEB
Acting Secretary